

In the Claims:

1-8. Canceled.

9. (Currently amended) A method of forming a superabsorbent, water-resistant polymer coating on at least a portion of a surface of an article, the method comprising:

(a) preparing a liquid aqueous coating composition ~~including an aqueous solution~~ having substantially no particulate components ~~comprising~~ including:

(i) a solution of water-soluble, superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer precursor in aqueous solution;

(ii) a non-particulate viscosity modifying agent ~~provided~~ in the form of an aqueous solution or dispersion; and

(iii) a binder in aqueous solution or emulsion;

(b) applying the liquid aqueous coating composition to at least a portion of a the surface of the article to form a liquid coating;

(c) volatilizing at least a substantial portion of water of the liquid coating aqueous solution by drying the liquid coating ~~composition~~; and

(d) heating the article to cure the superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer precursor by cross-linking to form the superabsorbent, water-resistant ~~coating including a superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer~~ that absorbs water when it is wetted and desorbs water when it is dried.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein applying the liquid aqueous coating composition to at least a portion of a surface of the article to form the liquid layer includes contacting ~~the liquid coating composition with~~ at least the portion of the surface of the article ~~to form a layer of liquid over at least the portion of the surface with the liquid aqueous coating composition.~~

11. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein heating the article to cure the superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer precursor ~~by cross-linking~~ includes heating the article to one of any temperatures less than approximately 300 degrees F.
12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein volatilizing at least a substantial portion of water of the ~~aqueous solution by drying the~~ liquid coating composition includes heating the article to a temperature of about 212 degrees F.
13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer precursor is selected from the group consisting of anionic alkali salts and alkali metal salts of the superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer.
14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the viscosity modifying agent is selected from the group consisting of alkyl celluloses, acrylamide polymers and mixtures thereof compatible with the superabsorbent polymer precursor solution and the binder in aqueous solution or dispersion.
15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the viscosity modifying agent includes a polyacrylamide aqueous solution.
16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the binder includes a film forming binder.
17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the film forming binder is selected from the group consisting of polyesters, polyurethanes, epoxies, latexes and mixtures thereof.
18. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein preparing a liquid aqueous coating composition ~~including an aqueous solution~~ further includes adding at least one of one or more wetting agents and one or more lubricants.

19. (Currently amended) (Currently amended) A method of forming a superabsorbent, water-resistant polymer coating on at least a portion of a surface of an article, the method comprising:

(a) preparing a liquid aqueous coating composition ~~including an aqueous solution~~ having substantially no particulate components ~~comprising~~ including:

(i) a solution of water-soluble, superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer precursor in aqueous solution;

(ii) a non-particulate viscosity modifying agent ~~provided~~ in the form of an aqueous solution or dispersion; and

(iii) a binder in aqueous solution or emulsion;

(b) applying the liquid aqueous coating composition to at least a portion of a the surface of the article to form a liquid coating;

(c) heating the article to cure the superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer precursor by cross-linking to form the superabsorbent, water-resistant ~~coating including a superabsorbent polyacrylate polymer~~ that absorbs water when it is wetted and desorbs water when it is dried.

20. (New) The method of claim 10 wherein contacting at least the portion of the surface of the article with the liquid aqueous coating composition includes spraying, dipping, or flooding at least the portion of the surface of the article with the liquid aqueous coating composition.

21. (New) The method of claim 10 wherein contacting at least the portion of the surface of the article with the liquid aqueous coating composition includes passing at least a portion of the article through a bath containing the liquid aqueous coating composition.

22. (New) The method of claim 9 further comprising passing the article with the liquid coating applied to at least a portion of the surface of the article through a stripper die prior to volatilizing and heating.